THE OCCURRENCE OF THE SUB-FAMILY *ASEMINAE* (COL.: CERAMBYCIDAE) IN THE BRITISH ISLES

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INTRODUCTION

IT IS little short of amazing, as Allen (1981) has reminded collectors, that the presence of our two species of *Arhopalus* and that of *Tetropium gabrieli* should have escaped the attention of British Coleopterists until the early 1900s; this is particularly bizarre considering that those three species attack and are found in the same host trees as *Asemum* in so many parts of Britain.

Whatever the reasons for these failures in detection, they were rectified within a few years by the publication of valuable papers on the group — Dr Sharp on *Criocephalus (Arhopalus),* Smith on the latter and *Asemum striatum* in 1905-06, and an exhaustive, definitive account of the life-history of *Tetropium* by Crawshay two years later.

Counties and vice-counties are represented by Brownean alphabetical symbols (Kaufmann, 1989): italicised ones denote a common distribution; bracketed letters indicate doubtful or unconfirmed records; the asterisk (*) stands for specimens imported from elsewhere.

Arhopalus rusticus L.

Found in coniferous forest land, this beetle is far from being exclusively Scottish, as was formerly the opinion: that was predicted over 40 years ago by Kaufmann (1948); if anything, there is a paucity of new county records from Scotland. The species has since spread beyond the Border and is becoming more common, especially in the south, south-east, the east and the Home Counties, than *A. tristis,* for which it has been mistaken on occasion (Mendel, 1978).

ENGLAND: BK CH DT EK EN ES EX HT MM ND NE (SC: the only Longicorn recorded from the Islands and certainly adventive) SH SL SR (WC*) WS.

WALES*: There is an unclassified record of an imported specimen from a coal mine (Sharp, 1905-06; Fowler & Donisthorpe, 1913; Kaufmann, 1946a and 1948; Horton, 1980).

SCOTLAND: EI EL PM.

The larva, which is both aggressive and destructive, is found in standing and fallen trees and the stumps of Aleppo, Corsican and Maritime pines, larch, Norway spruce, Scots pine and firs. It attacks the larvae of *Asemum striatum* if encountered in the same tree; it is also recorded from boles already occupied by *Leptura rubra* L. (Klausnitzer & Sander, 1981).

Larval parasites include the following Hymenoptera:—

Chasmias motatorius F., *Coelobracon neesi* Marsh, *Odontomeus appendiculatus* Grav., *O. pinetorum* Thoms., *Poemia notata* Holmgr., *Pyracmon xoridiformis* Hgr., *Radinopimpla atra* Grav. and *Xorides fuliginator* Thunb.

The life cycle may be anything up to two years, eclosion usually occurring from May onwards. Thereafter the beetle is about until September, well-nourished examples reaching a sizeable 30mm in length.

Of our two species of *Arhopalus, rusticus* is the more injurious, causing material damage to wood used for commercial and industrial purposes — pit props, planking, scaffolding, structural timber and the like.

There is an illuminating account (Houlbert, 1912) of the beetle's formidably strong mandibles. On this occasion having bored through the woodwork, it gnawed through a protective layer of thin zinc plating (presumably what is known here as galvanized iron sheeting); this was noticed, so the holes in the metal were plugged with solder. Far from deterring the beetle, it also demolished the plugs! A series of photographs, taken at intervals and corroborating this incident, accompanies Houlbert's observations. Such determined behaviour is paralleled by the efforts made to escape into the open of *Hylotrupes bajulus* L., known to have bitten its way through a 1/6th inch lead pipe, admittedly a softer metal (Kaufmann, 1947, who quotes earlier authorities for this story).

Although *rusticus* is nocturnal, normally hiding under the bark during the day, it is attracted to light; in hot weather it will emerge, becoming very active, rapid in its movements and taking easily to flight. According to Demelt (1966) copulation does not take place before dusk; under controlled conditions it has been seen to happen readily during daylight hours.

The first authentic native specimen was captured by Col. Yerbury near a pine stump in a remote part of the Highlands some ninety years ago (Sharp, 1905-06). In one of the earliest British catalogues to be published (Stephens, 1829), the name, *Callidium rusticum* (= *Arhopalus rusticus),* had already appeared. Ten years later, Stephens expressed in his Manual the view that *rusticus* was not truly indigenous. The species was eventually listed as British by Hudson Beare (1930). There is, incidentally, an old specimen of *rusticus,* perhaps of British provenance, collected by Revd F.W. Hope, in the Dale Collection at Oxford.

Its relation, *A. tristis* under the specific name of *polonicus* Mots., had at last been catalogued as an indigene 26 years earlier (Beare & Donisthorpe, 1904).

A. tristis F.

A beetle occurring mainly in pine plantations and woods, more particularly those found in southern counties. There are also records from the West Country and the Midlands, but no farther north than Lancashire. Recent indications are that the beetle is now becoming scarcer, more localised, and less commonly encountered than *rusticus.*

ENGLAND: *BK* CH *DT* EN* ES* EX HF HT GW MX NH NM OX (SC — an erroneous determination and record) SD *SH* SL *SR* SY* WK WX.

WALES: GM.

IRELAND: WI*.

Discovered by Smith (1905) in the New Forest in 1902, the first account of the species by Willowby Ellis appeared in this periodical a year later.

The principal host trees are larch, Norway spruce, Maritime and Scots pine; it is associated, too, with Sour Cherry (Capt. Xambeu *in* Duffy (1953). Exposed roots and boles are preferred, but dying trees and plantations damaged by forest fires are also attacked.

The larval stage may extend to as long as four years, depending very much upon the condition and quality of the pabulum, which in turn has a considerable bearing upon the size of the insect; this may vary from 8 to 30 mm, some of the larger specimens being many times heavier than examples from elsewhere in the vicinity.

Pupation usually takes place from June onwards, the adult emerging in mid-summer and not unusually to as late as October and November.

The pupa is parasitised by the Dipteron, *Megaselia rufipes* Mg.; where stumps inhabited by *tristis* also house colonies of the ant, *Lasius niger* L., Duffy (1953) has described how, once the roots were split open, the exposed larvae and pupae of *tristis* were subjected to swarms of ants which would seize them tightly in their mandibles; no exaplanation for this curious behaviour is offered.

Imagines are largely nocturnal, sometimes attracted to light, and not averse to sampling the juice of ripe fruit, including peaches. They may, however, be found during the day, sunning themselves on logs and stumps. A very wary beetle, swift on its legs, it is not easily caught by hand. A common method of capture is the use of bark traps in which the insect will hide.

There are no published records of its ever having been found in the same locality as *A. rusticus*; the reasons for such an apparent incompatibility are as yet unresolved: all that can be said at present is that as *rusticus* continues to spread across the country, so the population of *A. tristis* is evidently in decline.

Asemum striatum L.

A beetle that is unlikely to be found other than in forests and woodlands of a coniferous nature. It has been recorded from this country for at least the last 160 years but was at first considered to be exclusively a Highland species — it is indeed well-represented in Scotland and was figured by Curtis as long ago as 1830. Since those early times, however, it has been captured in wide areas around the Thames and Hampshire basins, and there are many county records from the Midlands, the north and East Anglia, besides others from the southern and south-western regions of

England. Distribution is still a little patchy; many specimens have no doubt been introduced southwards from Scotland and in infested timber imported from abroad. It has recently been found in Ireland (Speight, 1988) and there are modern records now from the Principality.

ENGLAND: BD *BK* CH CU DT EX EY GE GW HF HT IW LR NH NM* NN SD *SH* SL SN *SR* WK WN WO WS WW WX

WALES: FT MN PB RA

SCOTLAND: AM AN AS AY BF CT DF ED EI EL FF KB LA PC PE PM PN RE RF RW RX S SG SS

IRELAND: QC (Laois)

The larva of this species is found in Corsican pine, Douglas and other firs, larch, Mountain and Scots pines. There is an unusual record from oak. It attacks more particularly the stumps and exposed roots of freshly cut trees, branches, standing timber that has suffered outwardly from forest fires, and storm damaged and unstripped logs awaiting removal to timber yards: this accounts for its presence sometimes in sawmills and later in construction wood. Duffy (1953) has recorded telegraph poles severely damaged by *A. striatum* in contrast to Blair (1947) who expressed the view that its chances of reaching maturity in treated poles were slim.

The life cycle varies from two to three years, depending upon the continued freshness of the host tree; the condition of the pabulum also affects growth, adult beetles varying in size from very small examples to others three times as large. Larval parasites include the Ichneumonid, *Poemia notata* Holmgr. and the Braconid, *Coelobracon initiator* Nees.

Stumps and trees already inhabited by *A. striatum* are attacked by *Arhopalus rusticus* and *Rhagium bifasciatum* F.; should their respective larvae meet, which during tunnelling they do, such encounters are distinctly unfriendly, certainly so in the case of the latter, whose larva will retreat towards the roots of a stump, although after eclosion, that beetle will use any convenient *Asemum* burrow to emerge besides gnawing its own exit hole.

A. striatum usually eclodes during April and May and is about until September. Regarded as crepuscular rather than diurnal, it is sometimes attracted to artificial light. During the early part of the day it may be seen just concealed within the mouth of its bolt hole; the slightest disturbance, however, brings about a very rapid retreat down the burrow. Extracting it is quite a problem! (Smith, 1905; Kaufmann, 1946b, 1948). Nevertheless, in warm sunshine, post midday, the beetle emerges, becomes more active and will indulge in flight. At rest on trees and stumps, it characteristically holds its head against the bark with its body extended at an angle of 30 - 45 degrees to the surface.

a. *agreste* F.

This aberration with reddish-brown elytra is found not infrequently with the type although not sufficient notice has been taken of its occurrence;

consequently published records are on the sparse side.

ENGLAND: BK CH DT EX GE IW *SH* WK WN WS
WALES: FT
SCOTLAND: PM

It is almost certain that this form is more widespread in Wales and Scotland than the records above indicate.

For some inexplicable reason the aberration is not listed in our most recent British catalogue (Kloet & Hincks, 1977).

Tetropium castaneum L.

On the evidence so far published this species now appears to be a firm addition to the list of British Cerambycidae. Its presence may well be viewed with mixed feelings: Coleopterists will welcome its establishment here; the Forestry Commission and other interested parties, on the other hand, may be rather less enthusiastic over the quite recent colonisation (still limited and vulnerable) of a beetle which is the most damaging European member of the genus. It had been imported mainly from northern Europe in softwoods used by the building industry, predominantly so during the post-war years of reconstruction. It is from these sources, it is supposed, that *T. castaneum* has escaped to find new settlements so far restricted to Scotland.

ENGLAND: BK* SL*
SCOTLAND: AM (AN) AS ED

Although *T. castaneum* has been found in the Lowlands, it is more typically a montane species with a metamorphosis comparable to that of *T. gabrieli.*

The larva is commonly associated with Norway spruce, but it also attacks firs, larch and Scots pine: abroad, it has been taken from chestnut, oak and walnut trees. Very destructive, successive broods can reduce to uselessness standing live and dying trees within three years. Fortunately (or otherwise) it is parasitised by a host of Ichneumonidae and Braconidae, among which are enumerated *Baeacis dissimilis* Nees, *Coelobracon denigrator* L., *Coelocentrus caligatus* Grav., *Coeloides initiator* Nees, *Deuteroxorides collaris* Grav., *Doryctes leucogaster* Nees, *D. mutillator* Thunb., *D. obliteratus* Nees, *Helcon aequator* Nees, *H. dentator* F., *H. tardator* Nees, *Mesoleptus teredo* Htg., *Neoxorides nitens* Grav., *Pyracmon austriacus* Tsch., *Radinopimpla atra* Gr., *R. brachylabris* Krb., *Xorides niger* Pf. and *X. praecatorius* F.

The very active adult beetle emerges in April and may be found until August. A strong flier, it is attracted to unstripped logs and billets lying in sawmills and timber yards.

If spruce, larch and other coniferous trees continue to be imported into this country there is the possibility that *castaneum*, if present in the logs, will escape and seek 'naturalisation' elsewhere in Britain.

v. *fulcratum* F.

This is the black variety which has been taken with the type form.
SCOTLAND: AS ED

T. gabrieli Weise

A woodland species particularly attracted to afforested areas where there is a preponderance of larch – undoubtedly the favourite larval pabulum. Fairly widespread in England (though Welsh and Scottish records are still too few) and largely occurring in the Midlands, the north, East Anglia and the southern and south-western counties, including the Thames and Hampshire basins.
ENGLAND: BD *BK* BX CB CH CU DM (DY) EK EN ES EX EY GE GW HT IW LN LR MX MY NM OX SD SE *SH* SL SN SP *SR* ST SW WC WK WL WN WO WS WX WY*
WALES: MG MN
SCOTLAND: AM PC

Besides its well-known association with the European larch, the larva is also found in Norway spruce, Scots pine and fir trees. It causes considerable albeit largely superficial damage to felled timber. The discoloured needles and wilting branches of dying standing trees are sometimes an indication of its presence (Klausnitzer & Sander, 1981).

The larva is parasitised by a long list of Hymenoptera:– *Atanycolus initiator* Nees, *A. sculpturatus* Thoms., *Clistopyga sauberi* Brauns, *Coelobracon denigrator* L., *C. neesi* Marsh, *Deuteroxorides collaris* Grav., *Doryctes mutillator* Thunb., *D. obliteratus* Nees, *Ephialtes aciculatus* Héllen, *E. mesocentrus* Grav., *Helcon aequator* Nees, *H. dentator* F. *Pyracmon austriacus* Tsch., *P. lucidus* Clément, *Radinopimpla atra* Grav., *Rhyssa persuasoria* L., *Xorides brachylabris* Kriechb. and *X. irrigator* F.

As well as the above, larval predators include the Neuropteron, *Rhaphidia notata* F., the Coleoptera, *Malachius bipustulatus* L. and *Thanasimus formicarius* L., and the earwig, *Forficula auricularia* L. It is a tempting prey, too, to the Green Woodpecker.

The normal life cycle takes a year to complete, but in exceptionally warm seasons, this is known to have been reduced to as little as three months, eclosion occurring in April.

A widespread if localised beetle, *gabrieli* may be found throughout the summer; it is at its commonest in August, and where there is infestation it may be present by the hundreds. It runs swiftly, taking to flight in sunny weather. It settles on logs, posts, railings, and less frequently on broom flowers and *Heracleum*. The beetle in its various stages is found directly under the bark of the trees it attacks and is present regularly in timber yards and sawmills.

It has also been recorded as gnawing its way into lead piping in its efforts to gain freedom (Laing, 1919).

The genus *Tetropium* appears over the name *T. fuscum* F. in the Beare and Donisthorpe British catalogue of 1904; this is, however, an imported species not native to this country. *T. gabrieli* proper first finds its place in our lists, together with the so-called variety *crawshayi* Sharp, in Hudson Beare's catalogue of 1930.

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The 5 spot ladybird in Warwickshire

I wish to put on record the capture of a rare ladybird in Warwickshire. On the afternoon of 22nd July 1989 a male 5 spot ladybird (*Coccinella 5-punctata* L.) was netted in flight, in the north-western corner of Sutton Park (OS ref. SP089984), which lies just north of Birmingham between Streetly and Sutton Coldfield. The ladybird was of an orange red colour. For most species of this genus such a coloration is characteristic of young adults which have only recently emerged from pupae, and have yet to pass through a winter.

Both the geographical location, and the habitat where this ladybird was taken are unusual for the species. Majerus and Fowles (in press) give the distribution of this species as a disjunct one including five principal regions, southern Devon and Cornwall, south Dorset, west Wales, Cumbria and Northumbria, and the Spey Valley in Scotland. However, it should be noted that there have been no records for Dorset, Devon or